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ABSTRACT

This report suggests ways in which educational and business leaders can work together to address the problems of a growing proportion of young people who are not making successful transitions from school to productive adult lives. Different types of at-risk students are identified, and factors behind their disconnection from school via dropping out, and work, are detailed. Teenage unemployment is disproportionately high, and minority unemployment is even higher. Next, recommendations are presented to education leaders, business, government, and social service leaders, and policy makers. Leaders in all sectors are called upon to raise the visibility of the problem, sponsor debate, replicate successful programs, and take the necessary risks to restructure inefficient bureaucracies and create a competitive climate for ideas. Successful programs in both the private and public sectors are described. Finally, the report lists the members of the Business Advisory Commission. A six-page list of recommended readings is included. (KH)

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Education Commission of the States

Business Advisory Commission

Reconnecting Youth

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Reconnecting Youth

The Next Stage of Reform

A Report From the Business Advisory Commission of the Education Commission of the States

October 1985

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FOREWORD

The success of school reform across the nation has caused many of us to focus on a new set of problems. We recognize that school reforms cannot help young people who are not in school, and that more rigorous curricula might discourage some students and cause them to drop out of school. We now must move to meet the needs of those who, despite or because of school reform, are at greater risk of being lost to society as productive individuals.

We also must recognize our responsibility to teach students the virtues of civic responsibility that are essential to our survival as a democracy. School reform has not dealt with this issue, and perhaps cannot. But either within the classroom or beyond it, we must find ways to teach the next generations the civic virtues that have sustained American democracy for two centuries.

I am persuaded that a broadly framed program of national youth service may be one excellent way to address the needs of disconnected youth and, at the same time, cultivate that sense of citizenship, of responsibility to work for the common good. It also may have the effect of building understanding, tolerance, maturity and other traits essential for effective performance in business, government or other activities later in life.

This report of the ECS Business Advisory Commission concentrates primarily upon the needs of young people whose productive abilities might be lost to society. The Business Advisory Commission makes formal ECS's commitment to work with business leaders on issues of education and economic development. I am glad that dedicated businessmen and women are now an integral part of ECS, and I am convinced that cooperation is essential for our success. I am honored to present this report on behalf of the Education Commission of the States.

Charles S. Robb, Chairman
Business Advisory Commission
Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia
Chairman, Education Commission of the States, 1984-85

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that I submit this report, *Reconnecting Youth: The Next Stage of Reform* to the Business Advisory Commission and through this body to the Education Commission of the States. It examines a serious problem: the growing number of young people who are at risk of not becoming fully participating or involved citizens.

The Subcommittee on Youth Policy began its deliberations shortly after the March 8, 1985 "Forum on Youth Policy," with a charge to study the problems of at-risk youth and prepare a policy report for use by our nation's political, education and business leaders.

I would like to extend my personal thanks to the members of the subcommittee and their representatives: *Governor Richard Celeste, Carla Edlefson, Thornton Bradshaw, Samuel Convissor, Scotty Campbell, Harry Kenny, Diana Beaudoin, Ellen Futter, David Kearns, Albert Shanker, Maxine Frost, Bill Woodside, Ray Reisler, Randall Tobias, Dick Arnold, Mary Tenopyr, Jim Johnson, Barbara Hutchinson, Dave Florio* and *Taiga Ermansons* for the many hours they have given to this effort. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of *John Casteen, Gordon Davies, Bruce Chaloux, Richard Mills* and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, through staff member *Robert Martin.* This report has been considerably strengthened by their input.

The efforts of ECS staff and consultants should also be recognized. *Frank Newman* has been a source of vision throughout this effort. *Kent McGuire, Rexford Brown, Suzie Sullivan, Grace Belsches-Simmons, James Large, Anna Likens* and *Susan Adler* have all given their expertise and energy to this report's development and I thank them. *Gerry Gold*, with the National Institute for Work and Learning, has been an invaluable consultant to this effort.

Our aim is to offer recommendations, stimulate discussion and reaffirm the roles that business can play, in collaboration with educators and policy makers, in improving opportunities for all youth. If these purposes can be achieved, our efforts will have been successful.

James B. Campbell
Chairman, Subcommittee on Youth Policy
Business Advisory Commission

[redacted]

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The number of 14- to 24-year-olds who comprise America's entry-level labor pool is shrinking. Once almost a quarter of the U.S. population, this group will represent 16% of the population in 1995. At the same time, the number of young people who are disconnecting from school, work and the benefits they confer is on the rise. The entry-level labor pool, then, contains more and more of the kinds of teenagers employers have been able to overlook in the past: poorly motivated, lacking fundamental literacy skills and unacquainted with the responsibilities and demands of the work world. These young people are at risk of never living up to their potential, never leading productive adult lives.

The school reform movement of the last few years provides the momentum and many of the vehicles for attacking the problem of disconnected youth. The links forged between business, labor, education and policy leaders will be particularly critical for success. Disconnected youth are being brought back into the mainstream in many programs jointly funded and operated by the public and private sectors. We need many more such programs across the country, in urban and rural areas, involving large and small business and labor organizations, and approaching the problem in diverse ways.

Leaders in all sectors are called upon to raise the visibility of this problem, sponsor debate, replicate successful programs and take the necessary risks to get people moving.

Leaders in education are called upon to "get it right the first time": head off disconnection with effective early education, alternative schools and dropout prevention programs. Schools are challenged to move education reform into a new phase that connects at-risk students more directly with adults and the larger worlds of work and culture.

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Business and labor leaders are challenged to make the first work experiences of youth positive experiences, to steer dropouts back into school and to enter into training networks. Business and labor leaders have much to share with schools in need of restructuring. They are encouraged to offer their expertise in management, reorganization, decentralization, financing of innovations, personnel evaluation and labor negotiations in the interest of change.

Policy makers are challenged to enable all of the foregoing initiatives take place. Policy in diverse areas must be examined for its influence upon youth, streamlined and strengthened to address more effectively the problems of at-risk youth.

The problem of disconnecting youth has grave economic, social and political implications. There are successful programs for turning these young people around. It is time to take concerted public- and private-sector action that will guarantee the spread of these programs and the reclaiming of those young lives.

The problem, simply stated, is this: a growing proportion of our young people are not making successful transitions to productive adult lives. They are paying a heavy price. We, as a society, are paying a heavy price. In the years ahead, the costs are going to get higher.

In 1978, young adults constituted 23% of the U.S. population. By 1995, they will only constitute 16%, shrinking by one-quarter the size of the entry-level labor pool. Within that shrinking labor pool is a growing pool of "at-risk" young men and women: people in their teens and early twenties who *could* become productive citizens but most likely will not unless something out of the ordinary happens. They have the intelligence to succeed, but they lack important skills, family support, discipline and the motivation to make it. An unconscionably disproportionate number of them are poor, Black and Hispanic youth.

A decade ago, many businesses could afford to ignore these young people. They can no longer do so. Business and industry already spend $40 billion annually to train employees. The employees of the late eighties will be even more expensive to train. Increasingly, the private sector will find itself teaching them remedial reading, writing and mathematics. By 1990, education and training in the public and private sectors may constitute the largest industry in America.

Our choices are clear. We can do nothing to reduce the numbers of youth disconnecting from school, work and the values and benefits they confer. We can hope the problem will go away with an improved economy or some kind of technological revolution. We can believe that this problem is peculiar to certain cities and does not affect the health of the nation. We can say it is "the schools'" responsibility or "the government's" responsibility or someone else's cause. We can say that the problems of youth who are truly at risk defy solution.

It would be wiser, and far less costly, to act now. A number of factors suggest that the time is ripe:

- *Successful public, private and collaborative programs for turning those young people around exist.* Some unmotivated youth are being motivated. Some unskilled youth are being trained. Some disconnected adolescents are being reconnected to the values and vehicles most likely to guarantee a productive life. We know it can be done.
- *Education reform is well under way* in every state. This momentum for change can be used to move reform into a more comprehensive phase in which the problems of at-risk youth can be more directly addressed.

- *Business and industry are restructuring* in response to a profound transformation in the world economy. We have learned much about how to get "extraordinary performance out of ordinary people" and how to revitalize faltering institutions. That "how-to" can be shared with the schools and brought to bear on youth problems.
- Interest in *public service* for youth is high and growing. State, local and national service opportunities hold great potential for harnessing the energies of young people, developing their confidence and skills, and building bridges to their further education and steady employment.
- *New institutional forms, combining public and private interests, are being developed.* The current collaborative environment is ideal for addressing complex, multi-sector problems.

Who Is At Risk?

At-risk youth are young people who face uncertain futures as workers and citizens. At stake is whether they will move into productive adult lives or fall into patterns of chronic failure that deepen their alienation and dependency upon the welfare system.

Three categories of youth are of major concern:

- **The alienated.** These young people are uninterested in or dissatisfied with the values represented by school and work. They lack motivation to succeed in expected ways, they have poor school and work attendance records, and do not perform near their potential. Some are passive, others are defiant. Economic resources are not at issue: most alienated students come from the middle classes. Nor is alienation an urban problem; alienated students are everywhere.
- **The disadvantaged and alienated.** These young people exhibit all the symptoms of alienation but have, in addition, problems associated with being economically disadvantaged. A disproportionate share of these young people are minorities, a fact that complicates their problems and community efforts to help them in school or the workplace. Most of them lack basic social and academic skills. Most lack family support, useful networks and self-esteem. All could make strong contributions to their communities and lead productive adult lives if they got the right help at the right time.
- **The disadvantaged.** These young people have family support and motiva-

tion to succeed, but they suffer from various effects of economic deprivation and racial discrimination. Although they are not yet alienated, they are at risk of becoming so and at risk of never moving into satisfying, long-term employment.

Many alienated and disadvantaged/alienated students run away from home or drop out of school or fail to keep jobs or commit various minor crimes. However, their numbers are not the same as numbers of runaways, dropouts, unemployed or teenage offenders. No official statistics exist for them. It is not unreasonable, however, to believe that all three of the above groups constitute 10% to 15% of the 16- to 19-year-old age group, nationally. In major cities, it is not unreasonable to estimate that *half* the high school population is at risk. We are talking about, by conservative estimate, 1,250,000 White, 750,000 Black and 375,000 Hispanic 16- to 19-year-olds at risk. Addressing this issue, then, is not a matter of social responsibility alone. It is an urgent task central to the country's further economic and social development.

This last point is well demonstrated by the circumstances under which this report has come about. This is a report from members of the business community to members of the education and state policy communities. Its primary message is that we have a common problem, we must address it together and we must address it now.

Disconnecting From School

About 700,000 students dropped out of school last year and another 300,000 were chronic truants. In cities such as New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, the dropout rate is over 40%.

Rates are much higher for minorities and the poor. Students in the bottom third of the socioeconomic ladder have three to four times the dropout rate of those from affluent families. Black and Hispanic rates are 1½ to 2 times higher than White students.[1]

The problem is not just a minority problem or an urban problem; it is widespread. Since 1970, the dropout rate for Blacks has actually decreased nationally, while the rate for White students has edged up. In rural and suburban schools, dropout rates have either risen or stubbornly resisted efforts to lower them since 1965. Even if the rates for all groups were to stabilize, the situation would be worse than it used to be: our standards for schools and students are getting higher. The bottom rung of the "ladder of success" may be moving out of some students' reach.

Not all dropouts and "occasional" students are at-risk young people. Within two years of leaving school,

about a quarter of them enter various training programs. About 14% of the males and 9% of the females enter the GED program leading to a high school equivalency certificate. Others will "find themselves" in various ways. Most, however, will drift along in a limbo that involves neither school nor promising work.

Two-thirds of the students we are concerned about drop out because they have given up on the school as a vehicle for their success. They do not believe it will work for them because it hasn't worked for them all their lives. They do not have the desire, hope and motivation that schools tend to reward. Schools are for someone else. In disconnecting from school, these teens disconnect from the values and ideals the schools embody and promote. To use the phrase that became the title of the Carnegie Council on Children's final report, these young men and women see "small futures" for themselves.[2]

Experienced teachers and administrators can predict which students will most likely drop out even when the students are in the primary grades. They can identify alienated students, whether they drop out or continue to attend school fitfully and profitlessly. Disconnection is not a tragedy because it happens; it is a tragedy because many people saw it coming for years and did nothing about it.

Ironically, some of the recent recommendations for improving schools will not touch the at-risk students or will affect them adversely. As emphasis on individual academic achievement rises, low achievers are likely to throw in the towel. As standards for athletic participation go up, other low achievers, who have stayed in for the self-esteem and recognition they get from sports, will drop by the wayside. We favor higher standards. We think at-risk students can meet them with the right kind of help. But, unless schools can take special measures to keep "on-the-edge" students from going over the edge, we can expect dropout rates to rise.

Disconnected From Work

Teenagers in general have an unemployment rate three times the adult rate. More than three million 16- to 24-year-olds are looking for work and another 391,000 are classified as "discouraged"—i.e., they have given up. Most of these discouraged youth are at risk of becoming permanently disconnected from satisfying jobs and careers.

Unemployment is not evenly distributed across the population. The current rate for Black teens (40%) is almost three times the rate for Whites (15%). Far more Hispanic teens are looking for work than can find jobs. In part, the high minority unemployment rates reflect the fact that minorities are

often concentrated in areas where there are fewer jobs. In part, they reflect the fact that higher proportions of minority youth are underskilled. In part, the rates reflect various kinds of discrimination and lack of access to job information and contacts.

Experts have advanced a number of explanations for youth unemployment. They have attributed it to the rapid growth of the youth population during the baby boom, to a decline in the skills of youth, to the influence of the minimum wage, to shifts in occupational openings and to the fact that youth are especially affected by poor economic conditions. Careful scrutiny of each explanation reveals that it is inadequate. We simply have no uncomplicated explanations for youth unemployment.[3]

There are several ways young people can be disconnected from work. One of them is physical: they may not live where there are sufficient jobs. That problem may be easy to solve: transport the youth to the jobs.

Other kinds of disconnection are more problematic. Some youth, particularly minorities, are trapped in jobs that offer low pay, minimal or no fringe benefits and little chance for advancement. Solutions to this problem are more complicated. They involve building bridges between these entry-level jobs; the schools; and professional, technical and management opportunities.

A third kind of disconnection happens when young people lack the basic skills to do the available jobs. The schools bear primary responsibility for that. They must insure that students can read, write, handle basic mathematics and solve problems.

Many alienated youth manifest a fourth kind of disconnection. They are not very interested in work. They show little ambition on the job. Their behavior keeps some employers from hiring them and forces others to fire them. It may be that the most important contribution of school for these youth is not the academic skills and knowledge students acquire, but the habits and values that schools also impart to youth. Schools must become better at instilling in students a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, reliability and a capacity for working harmoniously with others.

Broader Disconnections

Dropping out and unemployment present real and urgent problems in themselves. But they are also symptoms of underlying problems with the nation's integrative systems. Other symptoms also suggest that traditional American ways of integrating generations and ethnic groups into the mainstream are under stress:

- Teenage pregnancy and childbirth rates have grown for all teens, regardless of ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

More than one million teens become pregnant each year. Most of these teenagers do not marry.

- Arrests of people under 18 for drug abuse increased 60-fold between 1960 and 1980. Arrests for drunkenness among high school seniors rose by 300% between 1960 and 1980.
- Young people under age 21 account for more than half of all arrests for serious crimes. In 1960, 18- to 24-year-olds accounted for only 18% of all arrests; by 1980, they accounted for 34%.
- The homicide rate for non-White teens increased 18% between 1950 and 1978, while the rate for Whites increased an astounding 232%.
- Death by suicide among teenagers increased for all groups. The suicide rate for Whites rose 177% between 1950 and 1978, while the rate among non-Whites rose 162%. A teenager commits suicide every 90 minutes.

Increases in youth suicide, crime, drug use and pregnancy are independent phenomena with their own origins. No one would suggest that a single causal mechanism underlies them, but these are all signs of alienation and disconnection. All suggest that family, community, school and other agencies of socialization and integration are not working as they once were.

Certainly, there is evidence that the American family is changing. In 1970, 85% of children 18 years of age lived with two parents; today, the proportion is just under 75%. The proportion of single-parent families has just about doubled since 1970, rising from 13% to 26%. Most Black children do not live in two-parent homes: 49% live with one parent and 8% live with neither parent. A third of Hispanic children live with one parent.

We do not know all of the consequences of growing up in single-parent families. However, research does confirm that various indicators of disconnection, such as dropping out, truancy, delinquency and poor academic performance, are linked to family structure and family education support variables.[4] We know that the number of parents in the home and the work status of the mother have significant effects on student achievement.[5] Encouragement by parents to spend more time reading and doing homework, their availability to attend in-school programs, extracurricular activities and parent-teacher conferences are critical. We know that single parents have less time to spend with their children than is the case in families where both parents are present.[6]

Recent trends in adolescent pregnancy and parenthood are of particular concern. The birth rate of unmarried

teenagers increased by 29% between 1970 and 1982.[7] When coupled with the increasing tendency for teenagers to raise their own children, the result is an increasing number of single teenage parents. Last year, unwed teens gave birth to 650,000 babies. Many of these young mothers do not return to school. Teen parents who drop out place their children at risk.

We believe that schools, social service agencies, businesses and community service organizations must step in to address the needs of alienated youth and mitigate the unanticipated consequences of changing family structure. Since schools have been a most powerful public integrative system, schools are a good place to start. Since jobs for young people are powerful private-sector integrators, changes should be made in the kinds of jobs young people get and their relation to later jobs. Since public policy can affect schooling and jobs and since political leadership can build a sense of community, policy makers should participate in the process of changing schools and work experience for youth. Since there are programs that work, everyone should spread the word and share the expertise.

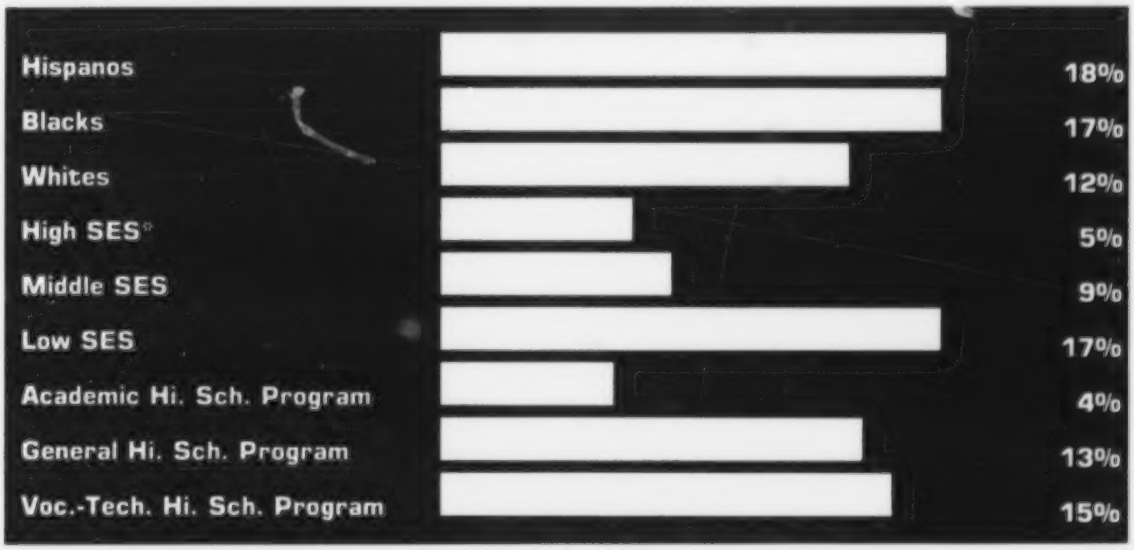
Reconnecting Our Youth

We have examined a serious problem. Too many of our young people are not making a successful transition to productive adult life and education reform, as currently structured, is not likely to correct this. Many youth are not well served by the traditional education structure. Others find the transition into the world of work exceedingly difficult. We are concerned because youth are the key to this country's economic prosperity and social development. Students who drop out and lack skills for employment are more often unemployed than others. They have higher crime and delinquency rates. They pay little in taxes and appear more often on welfare rolls. For corporate America, and for state and local governments, they represent a $20 billion-a-year-loss.

Yet many of our young people can be reclaimed through cooperative efforts of business and education leaders. We recommend major changes in schooling that go beyond those suggested in the first wave of education reform. We recommend changes in the entry-level labor market for youth and its relations with schools and the primary labor market. We commend exemplary programs already in place and urge that they be replicated. We recommend that state policies that inhibit the necessary changes be replaced by policies that encourage creative, productive approaches to this most serious problem.

Indicators of Disconnection

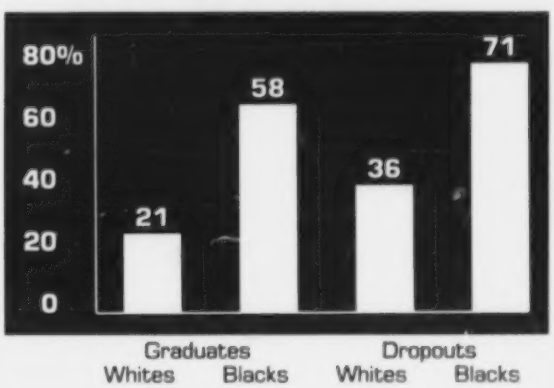
Dropout Rates of 1980 Sophomores by Population Groups



*Socioeconomic status.

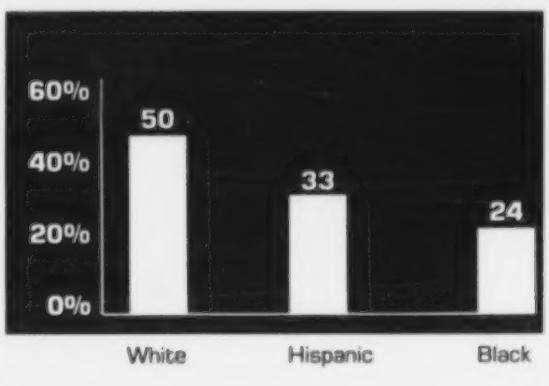
Source: Samuel Peng, *High School Dropouts: A National Concern.* Prepared for ECS Business Advisory Commission, March 1985, p. 8.

High School Graduate and Dropout Unemployment by Race, 1982



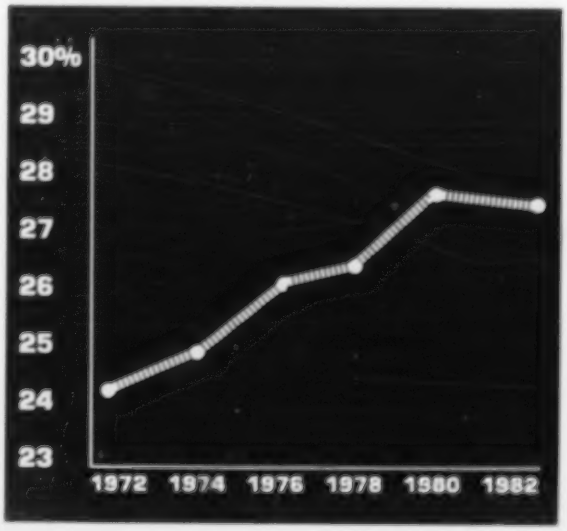
Source: Employment and Training Report to the President, 1982. U.S. Department of Labor.

Teenagers Employed, 1985



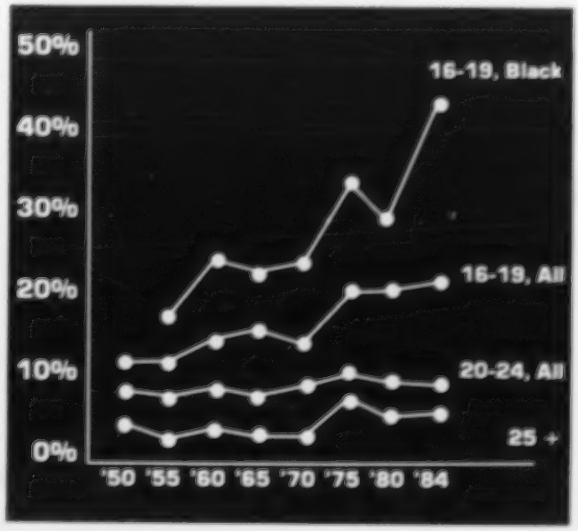
Source: *The First Friday Report,* April 5, 1985, Full Employment Action Council.

Percentage of 18-Year-Olds Not Graduating, 1972-82



Source: Samuel Peng, *High School Dropouts: A National Concern*. Prepared for ECS Business Advisory Commission, March 1985, p. 7.

Youth Unemployment, 1950-84



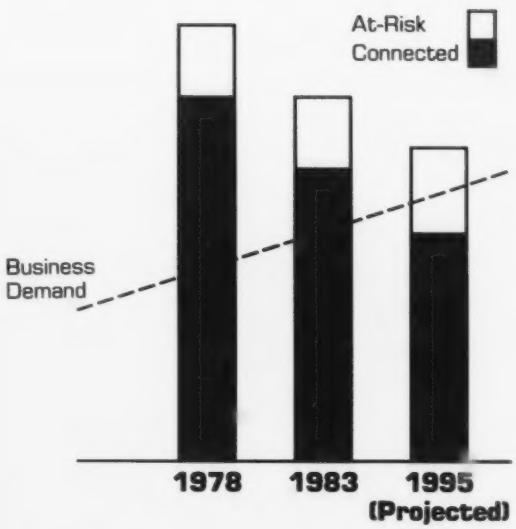
Source: Russell Rumberger, *The Growing Problem of Youth Unemployment*, paper written for ECS Business Advisory Commission, March 1985, p. 8.

School Noncompletion Rates 1983

North Dakota	5%	Oklahoma	20%	Nevada	25%
Minnesota	9%	Colorado	21%	**U.S. average**	**26%**
Delaware	11%	Indiana	22%	Michigan	26%
Iowa	12%	Connecticut	22%	Oregon	27%
South Dakota	15%	Idaho	22%	New Mexico	29%
Vermont	15%	Alaska	22%	Texas	31%
Utah	15%	Massachusetts	23%	North Carolina	31%
Nebraska	16%	West Virginia	23%	Arizona	32%
Wisconsin	16%	Illinois	23%	Kentucky	32%
Montana	17%	Maine	23%	Alabama	33%
New Jersey	17%	New Hampshire	23%	New York	33%
Kansas	17%	Arkansas	24%	South Carolina	34%
Hawaii	18%	Missouri	24%	Georgia	34%
Ohio	18%	Virginia	24%	Florida	35%
Wyoming	18%	Washington	25%	Tennessee	35%
Maryland	19%	Rhode Island	25%	Mississippi	36%
Pennsylvania	20%	California	25%	District of Columbia	42%
				Louisiana	43%

Source: *U.S. News and World Report*, June 3, 1985.

Declining Youth Population With an Increasing At-Risk Segment Compared to Rising Business Demand for Entry-Level Employees



In 1978, 23% of the total U.S. population were between the ages of 16 and 24. By 1983 that percentage had dropped to 19%. Based on current birth rates, it will further decline to 16% by 1995. At the same time, the percentage of youth at risk is growing.

Assuming that the nation's economy continues to expand at a moderate pace, business will be forced to dip increasingly into the at-risk segment of the entry-level youth employment pool.

Sources: U.S. Department of Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States,* 1984.

National Commission on Secondary Education for Hispanics. *Make Something Happen,* 1984.

U.S. Department of Commerce. *Business Conditions Digest,* March 1985.

U.S. Congress, Congressional Budget Office. *Poverty Among Children,* May 1985.

National Education Association. *The Strategic Context of Education in America, 1985-1995.*

Indicators of Growing Youth Problems

Children in poverty	▲	Up from 16% in 1970 to 22% in 1985. About 14 million children live in poverty. Almost half of Black children and one-third of Hispanic children live in poverty.
Drug and alcohol abuse	▲	Up 60-fold since 1960
Teenage pregnancy	▲	Up 109% for Whites, 10% for non-Whites since 1960
Unmarried mothers	▲	Up from less than 1% in 1970 to over 6% today
Female headed households	▲	Up from 12% in 1970 to 23% in 1984
Teenage homicide	▲	Up more than 200% for Whites, 16% for non-Whites since 1950
Teenage suicide	▲	Up more than 150% since 1950
Teenage crime	▲	Arrests up from 18% in 1960 to 34% in 1980 (18-to-24-year olds)
Teenage unemployment	▲	Up 35% for non-Whites, 60% for Whites since 1961

We challenge Americans in all walks of life to reconnect young people who have become disconnected from the values, the schooling and the early work experiences that will guarantee for them a productive future.

1. TO ALL LEADERS:

We challenge this country's education, business, government and social service leaders to do what only they can do: lead this nation to a better understanding of this troubling problem; clarify the consequences of doing nothing; guide citizens to action that will reconnect these young people.

- Get the facts out to the public — facts about what's wrong and facts about what's working
- Sponsor vigorous debate about the problem and proposed solutions
- Organize new coalitions that can get the job done
- Coordinate programs, agencies, youth clubs and service organizations that are now fragmented
- Enter into partnerships that smooth the school-to-work transition for at-risk youth: cooperative education programs, mentor programs and career education programs
- Develop community and state service opportunities, not just for at-risk youth but for all youth. Connect young people from all walks of life to one another. Connect them to the values, habits and skills they will need for productive citizenship
- Work to raise the public and private resources it will take to address this problem
- Above all, *take risks*. This is not a problem for the timid. This is not an issue for those who fear for their popularity or want to cover all their bets. Cut the red tape. Restructure inefficient bureaucracies. Create a competitive climate for ideas. Reward imagination. Reward people who take chances.

We salute the thousands of citizens around the country — in schools; state houses and legislatures; large and small businesses; labor unions and social service agencies; city, state and federal programs — who have already taken the lead. They deserve our gratitude and they need our help. We challenge thousands more like them to come forward.

We have a job to do together, but we also have work to do in our respective sectors. The following challenges and exemplary programs point the way. We do not pretend to know all the answers. We do know, however, that if something is clearly not working, it should be dropped and replaced with something more promising.

"The difference between an extraordinarily good program in some community and one that isn't working very well in another is a few outstanding leaders. They may be teachers, they may be administrators, they may be industry people, they may be parents — but they are people who simply say in our community, we are going to have good education. And whatever it takes, we are going to provide it."

Richard Heckert

"Despite what looks like a very large number of programs, the proportion of the kids who are at risk that have been touched is very small."

James Campbell

2. TO EDUCATION LEADERS:

We challenge the nation's schools to become better at "getting it right the first time." Effective early education is far less costly than remedial education. Preventing students from dropping out is less costly than training dropouts.

Schools know what does *not* work for high-risk youth. In particular, what we are doing *now* does not work. Why persist? If a youngster is not responding to a normal program, try something new. If that does not work, do something else.

Reform must move into postsecondary education as well. Too many institutions of higher education view the at-risk teenager as someone else's problem. As the entry-level job pool shrinks, so does the pool of potential undergraduates. The higher education community has as much cause to be concerned about the future as the business community. Now it, too, must act.

- Elementary and secondary education leaders are not without ideas about what to do. Strong recommendations based upon detailed studies of schooling have recently been put forth by John Goodlad, Theodore Sizer and Ernest Boyer and many colleagues.[7] The most far-reaching of these have not yet even entered into the reform debate. They call for a profound restructuring of the schools and a thorough rethinking of our educational priorities. We challenge education leaders to be as daring in their reform as the most daring businesses have been in their efforts to adjust to a new world economy.
- Early childhood education helps children who are at risk. The costs of providing it are minimal, compared to the costs of welfare dependency, lost taxes and wasted lives. We need more and better early childhood enrichment programs.
- Quality after-school care is important for a rapidly growing number of children from all economic strata. It is especially important for children of poverty.
- As a baseline standard for effective school reform, every 6th grader should be able to read, write, speak and compute at a 6th grade level. Those who cannot should not be relegated to remedial programs that only repeat the pedagogy that failed the first time.
- High school dropouts need opportunities to drop back in. They are unlikely to drop back into the same school under the same conditions they left. They need separate schools within schools, alternative schools that are truly alternative, work-study programs or

cooperative education programs. The need for these options far exceeds their availability.

- Secondary schools, community colleges and four-year institutions should expand cooperative programs for meeting the educational needs of their clients and create new collaborative programs where the need is clear.

In issuing these challenges, we have in mind a number of communities and institutions that are already moving ahead. For example:

- **Middle College High School, La Guardia Community College, New York, New York.** Middle College High School is an alternative high school, jointly funded by the City University of New York and the New York City Board of Education. It is housed on La Guardia Community College's campus. High-risk students in grades 10–12 are enrolled in a highly successful program that reduces the dropout rate, improves academic performance and exposes them to career options through internships and work placements.
- **Cities in Schools, Washington, D.C. (Headquarters).** Cities in Schools (CIS) is a multi-sponsored program focusing on youth and their families. Using schools as the focal point, CIS links social services and business services to the education system to present youth in need with a coordinated package of services. The program often serves as an umbrella for a variety of more specialized services and activities. CIS is operating in seven cities: Atlanta, Bethlehem, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Washington, D.C. and West Palm Beach. Dallas, Austin, El Paso and San Antonio are currently starting Communities in Schools programs based on this model.
- **School-Age Maternity Program, Madison, Wisconsin.** The School-Age Maternity Program (SAM) is an education program for pregnant students in the Madison Metropolitan School District. The program is structured to meet the educational, medical and social needs of pregnant students by arranging for required support services (e.g., medical exams) and an individualized instructional plan for each student.
- **The Philadelphia Academies.** The Philadelphia High School Academies Program has been operating since 1970. The program provides disadvantaged, inner-city high school students with marketable job skills. There are four academies operating in seven public high schools: the Academy of Applied Electrical Science, the Philadelphia Business

"This is a tough thing we are talking about here. In a real sense, it's a lot tougher than what we have been talking about in terms of reform efforts to get excellence."

James B. Hunt

"It's very clear that if community-based organizations don't work together, things don't get done."

David Kearns

Academy, the Academy of Applied Automotive and Mechanical Science, and the Health Care Academy. Functioning as schools within schools, the academies provide vocational education and career development by relating the study of basic skills and social studies to the vocational demands associated with the career paths chosen by students. The program combines a carefully prescribed process for selecting academic courses, counseling and personal attention, and follow-up by teachers, as well as actual work experience and job skills.

- **Drop-out Prevention Program, San Jose, California.** The San Jose Unified School District is in the developmental stage of an innovative dropout prevention program focusing at the elementary school level. A Drop-out Prevention Team formed in 1984 determined that high student mobility adversely affects a student's educational experience and has developed the concept of "bonding" students to particular schools in the community as a key strategy for reducing the drop-out rate in the district. Accordingly, the program will provide for inter- and intradistrict waivers and the necessary transportation so that regardless of the residence patterns of families in the area, students may continue to attend the elementary school in which they were originally enrolled. In addition, supplemental counseling services will be provided to help administrative and teaching personnel respond to the critical needs of students at risk of becoming drop-outs or permanent underachievers. A third component of the program involves reexamining the way education services are organized and delivered in the participating schools. If the pilot program is successful, the district plans to expand this effort to additional elementary schools in the attendance area.

3. TO BUSINESS LEADERS:

We challenge our private-sector colleagues in large and small businesses and in labor to do what they must do to insure a high-quality work force in the years ahead. Through state business roundtables, community private industry councils, trade organizations, union halls, job training councils, the Chamber of Commerce and all the networks that tie us together, business leaders must raise this issue, debate it, look at exemplary programs, join in partnerships and get to work. We cannot afford to let the proportion of at-risk youth in the labor force continue to grow. We cannot afford to say it is someone else's problem.

The businesses and unions with whom youth make their first contacts with the world of work must make an effort to see that any youth who wants to work has the opportunity to do so. You cannot learn the work ethic or the discipline of work or the satisfactions of labor if you do not have a job. Business and labor must also see to it that the early job experiences of young people are positive experiences.

At-risk youth present special problems to employers. We do not ask that they be coddled. We suggest that many of them are diamonds in the rough. Under the right circumstances, they repay investments in training and patience many times over.

- Join in cooperative education programs that connect students to role models in the world of work. "Mentor" programs that link students to particular businesses or trades over a number of months or years are particularly effective.
- Assure that the resources available through the Job Training Partnership Act and similar programs are used to build or support successful programs for at-risk youth.
- See to it that every job is an opportunity to develop character and self-esteem. Every job can be a learning opportunity.
- Develop incentives for employees to stay in school, go back to school or go on to further schooling.
- Develop networks and contact with public and private organizations that specialize in training at-risk youth for specific jobs. Individual small businesses cannot afford elaborate training programs, but networks of small businesses may be able to spread the cost around.
- Develop transportation options that link young people to jobs. Already there are situations where the jobs are in one area and the potential young workers live elsewhere. These situations will multiply as the job pool shrinks.
- Provide opportunities for employees to work with schools and programs that turn troubled young people around. Donate in-kind services, facilities and materials to programs that work.
- Get behind schools that demonstrate sound management, clear goals and positive results. They need your vocal support.
- Sponsor seminars on business expertise useful to schools attempting to restructure. Through partnerships, compacts, private industry councils, the Chamber of Commerce or labor unions, business leaders can offer expertise in management, personnel evaluation, creative financing of new programs or materials. People in business and labor leaders have learned a great deal about negotiating contracts in

"Would it be unrealistic, given the coming labor shortage and the fact that we are not likely to make a huge dent in the at-risk population, [to] develop local and state programs which would guarantee a job to every youngster who graduates from high school?"

Albert Shanker

> ***"In the golden ghetto of the affluent suburbs, the student population and the cost of schooling may well decline. In the real ghetto, this population and the percentage of at-risk kids in it will grow. We will have to find ways to provide resources where the needs are greatest."***
>
> *Richard Arnold*

the interest of radical change or survival. Many business people have had recent experience with decentralizing, debureaucratizing and reorganizing large systems. Business and labor have had to deal with many of the pressures now being placed upon schools. They have more useful advice to offer than many of them recognize.

- Form business advisory councils, roundtables and other forums for discourse on public policy issues. Businesses, small and large, have an important role to play in bringing issues to the attention of state and local policy makers. Business input does make a difference.

In issuing these challenges, we have in mind a number of private sector initiatives by large and small businesses and unions. For example:

- **STAMI Corporation, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.** As a franchise of Wendy's International, the STAMI Corporation offers a progression of career opportunities to young people just entering the labor market. Inexperienced youth learn basic work habits and can begin as food processors. An opportunity is provided to move into a series of positions (i.e., crew leader, product coordinator), leading eventually to manager. In this way, STAMI has sought to change the perception of employment in the fast-food industry as "dead-end," nonskill-enhancing work.
- **Newport News Ship Building and Dry Dock Company.** The Newport News Ship Building and Dry Dock Company (NNS) collaborates with a variety of local education institutions. The company's activities include: (1) career awareness and counseling programs for 8th grade students; (2) support for minority students interested in technical and engineering careers, including curriculum materials and sponsorship of camp and club experiences and summer work experiences for selected high school students in technical and science occupations; (3) instructor exchange programs for high school vocational teachers; (4) management skills workshops for school administrators; (5) cooperative education and summer jobs for college engineering students; and (6) adult evening education courses in basic and occupational skills offered for NNS employees by school districts.
- **National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering.** The National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME) works with employers and educators to assist disadvantaged and minority youth in entering the engineering profession. Like the more

recently initiated Leadership Education and Development Program (LEAD) for the development of business and managerial talent in minority youth, NACME actively seeks out young people in their high school and junior high school years. Working with school systems and community organizations, NACME supports these students and their schools with curriculum materials and counseling, financial assistance, summer jobs, cooperative education options and role models.

- **Boston Compact.** The Boston Compact is a formal agreement between the public schools and the city's major private-sector employers. Goals have been set for measurable improvements in daily school attendance, reduction of dropout rates and successful placement of high school graduates in employment or college. A November 1983 agreement between the school system and 25 area colleges committed schools to better academic preparation of students and colleges to improve their assistance to the schools. Schools, their business partners and partnership colleges each prepare annual plans addressing their respective roles in accomplishing these goals. Attendance at schools has become a primary criterion for employment in a summer jobs program coordinated by the local private industry council. In December 1984, a third component of the Compact took effect when the Boston Area Trade Union Council signed an agreement with the mayor and the school district to set aside 5% of its apprentice program spaces annually to qualified public school graduates.

4. TO POLICY MAKERS:

We challenge federal, state and local policy makers to clear the way for changes that must be made. Create the incentives. Remove the barriers. Bring the problems and the solutions to wide public notice. Enable schools to do what must be done to reduce alienation and dropout rates. Enable partnerships between schools, public agencies and businesses to flourish and be effective. Revamp state and federal programs for at-risk youth where they are not accomplishing their aims. Coordinate youth programs and develop opportunities for all youth to work, either in private-sector jobs or in public service programs.

The work of education reform has only begun. It is not likely to end in the forseeable future. This country is undergoing profound economic, social and demographic transformations that will insure continued pressure on our schools and businesses to be more productive, more creative and

"I worked for four or five years with kids who had problems and the only solution I saw for those kids was one-on-one relationships."

Gov. Thomas Kean

more responsive every year than they were the year before. Policy making must itself become more productive, creative and responsive as it enables and guides the necessary institutional changes.

- Develop community and state service opportunities to deal with unemployed, underskilled, idealistic or disconnected youth all at the same time. Effective programs train youth, teach them about the demands of work, build self-esteem and get important work done that would not otherwise be done.
- Create incentives for widespread adaptation and replication of successful youth education, employment and service programs.
- Coordinate programs to maximize incentives and eliminate barriers. State and federal policies with regard to taxes, health, minimum wage, unemployment insurance, housing, criminal justice, transportation, welfare, urban development and military development may provide incentives or disincentives. Policy makers must begin now to ferret out both. Many business leaders stand ready to help in this complex, arduous but absolutely necessary simplification and redirection of policy.
- Consider new structures and procedures for effecting the transition from school to work or other productive pursuits. In our complex, fast-moving world, occupations and job descriptions arise, change and disappear with astonishing speed. Many at-risk youth lack the knowledge and sophistication required in making the transition from school to future work and learning opportunities. Young people today need more and better guidance than ever before. An idea with great merit is the creation of "youth opportunity boards" that include representatives of local service organizations, large and small business, labor organizations, churches and the schools. These boards would identify youth in need, determine the range of services and assistance they require and assist individual youngsters in negotiating these transition years.

We applaud a number of state efforts to address youth issues:

- **California Conservation Corps.** The California Conservation Corps (CCC) is a service and jobs program targeted at 18- to 23-year-olds. The primary objectives of the CCC are to promote good work attitudes and habits in young people and to protect the state's natu-

ral resources through public service conservation work. CCC is now experimenting with partnership models involving nonprofit organizations, cities and counties where state dollars are matched with funds to provide youth service experience to greater numbers of young people.

- **New Mexico.** In New Mexico, under the leadership of the governor, a number of task forces have been formed to address youth issues: the Cabinet Committee on Children and Youth (composed of the secretaries of major state departments), the Governor's Interagency Public Advisory Council for Children and Youth (community leaders and service providers), and the Governor's Youth Commission. The Cabinet Council coordinates the long-range planning of programs and services for youth and develops budgets related to these programs. The Interagency Public Advisory Council identifies key policy issues related to youth, collects information related to programs for children and youth from state agencies, reviews agency rules, regulations, guidelines and procedures, evaluates services for youth and makes recommendations for improving these services. The Governor's Youth Commission consults with and advises the Governor's Cabinet Committee on youth-related issues. All three committees comprise the Governor's Office of Children and Youth, established by executive order in July 1985. New Mexico is now providing support for community youth employment initiatives, encouraging state government personnel policies to positively address youth and promoting private and public nonprofit involvement in youth issues.

- **Texas.** Since 1984, Texas has used state government leadership to complement strong private-sector programs well under way in the state's major cities. The state youth policy adopted by the state job training coordinating council in August 1984 emphasizes the use of performance standards for programs that combine education career planning and work experience. Model programs that have moved from demonstration status to statewide operation include: (1) Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a program for disadvantaged youth, 14 and 15 years old. These students are sent to 10 university campuses for eight-week periods of academic and personal development during the summer, (2) the Texas Conservation Corp, a year-around pro-

"I would hope that we would not lower the standards or even indicate that we wanted to lower standards . . . I think the answer is to keep the standards high and help the children meet the standards, because they'll have to compete in the same world as the kids who already meet the standards."

Mary Futrell

"Everyone understands we need to improve the excellence of our academic efforts. But the way you do that can have a tremendous impact on what happens to some of the kids who may find that an impossible environment in which to live."

Alan Campbell

gram of training and work, personal and career development and academic classes for out-of-school 18- to 21-year-old youth, (3) Communities in Schools, a program based on the National Cities in Schools model and demonstrated in Houston as a dropout prevention effort. This program is being replicated in four other urban school districts and provides intensive tutoring and counseling to in-school, high-risk youth and their families by bringing the resources of the youth service agencies into the schools.

- **Wisconsin.** Earlier this year, the Wisconsin legislature passed an At-Risk Children's Initiative, recognizing that large numbers of the state's school-age children are experiencing problems that seriously interfere with their learning, school attendance, preparation for employment or progress toward graduation. The major goals of this new legislation are to: (1) reduce the average statewide high school dropout rate to 2% or less annually by 1990; (2) develop coordination between school, community resources and the home to enhance youth school adjustment and achievement; (3) make available to all pupils a comprehensive, coordinated program of student support services; (4) provide fiscal incentives for the establishment of kindergarten programs for 4-year-old children from impoverished circumstances; (5) coordinate state education department resources serving specific at-risk children populations; and (6) develop state and local interagency cooperation among programs serving at-risk youth. The legislation includes funds for grants to school districts and community service organizations to implement early childhood and dropout prevention programs.

Our last challenge brings us back to the first. The keys to dealing effectively with this problem are leadership and collaboration. There is no single answer, no single or simple solution to the problems of at-risk youth. We know that schools can and must play major roles in any collaborative approaches to these problems. If they cannot do so in their present institutional form, then they must be flexible enough to find new and better ways to integrate at-risk youth into the mainstream.

Many critical issues are now before the American public. None, we think, will have more profound social, economic and political consequences if we fail to address it. It is time for leaders to stir the national conscience and challenge the national imagination. We believe that as Americans learn more about this issue they will, as they always have, rise to the challenge.

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1. As **Samuel Peng** points out in a paper written for the Business Advisory Commission, estimates of dropout rates vary considerably, depending upon different definitions of the term, age levels counted and other factors. Numbers in this report represent our best conservative estimates, based on available data.
2. **Richard de Lone, Small Futures,** a report for the Carnegie Council on Children. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1979.
3. See **Russell Rumberger, "The Growing Problem of Youth Unemployment,"** a paper written for the ECS Business Advisory Commission (ECS, 1985).
4. For instance, a national study of high school dropouts found that students exhibiting disciplinary problems were typically males from nonintact families. In addition, there was typically a lack of supportive educational environment in the house. The home was less likely to have a place to study, and the parents neither encouraged nonschool-related learning nor monitored their children's school behavior. Family educational support variables, such as the mother's educational aspirations for the student, parent involvement in selection of courses and whether both parents were present in the home were also important determinants in a student's decision to drop out. See **P.R. Rosenbaum, "Dropping Out of High School in the United States: The Analysis of an Observational Study Embedded in a Complex Sample Survey,"** a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Chicago, Ill., 1985).
5. **Ann Milne, David Myers, Alvin Rosenthal and Alan Ginsburg, "Single Parents, Working Mothers and the Educational Achievement of School Children,"** revised version of two papers presented at the annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association, April 1985.

6. See **Frank Howell and William Frase, "Early Transition into Adult Roles: Some Antecedents and Outcomes,"** *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 19, 1982. For a review of the literature, see **E.M. Hetherington et al. "Cognitive Performance, School Behavior and Achievement of Children From One-Parent Households,"** a report prepared for the Families as Educators Team (National Institute of Education, 1981).
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These books provide a host of suggestions for changes that would connect at-risk students to adults, to other students, to their own learning and to wider worlds of work and culture. Some deserving public discussion, debate and action include:

- Smaller pupil-adult ratios
- Longer association between pupils and a set of teachers (e.g., four years instead of one year)
- Schools within schools
- Teaching styles that force more pupil/teacher interaction

In encouraging programs that *connect at-risk students to other students*, states should create incentives for

- Abolition of tracking
- Mixing vocational students and general students
- Collaborative learning projects
- Peer group teaching and learning

For encouraging programs that *connect at-risk students to their learning*, states should create incentives for districts for

- Simplification of the curriculum
- Magnet schools and classes

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Also available from the Education Commission of the States is the **Business Advisory Commission' Briefing Book,** dated March 8, 1985.

A 16-minute video tape dramatizing this issue, ***Futures At Risk,*** is also available for purchase or rental. Call ECS for prices.

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